

From: Blair Heiserman
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/24/02 11:54am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

I would just like to take a moment to voice my displeasure with the current settlement / remedy against Microsoft.

The proposed settlement lets Microsoft off with no real punishment for using and abusing their desktop monopoly.

Microsoft has leveraged their monopoly to unfairly stop competition. This can be seen in many different areas from the boot loader (restrictions against allowing other operating systems to be able to load with or instead of Windows, BeOS being a good example, through their OEM contracts), the browser (Internet Explorer and prohibitions against bundling Netscape in contracts with OEM manufacturers and even with Apple. Another recent example is attempting to artificially lock out non-Microsoft browsers from MSN), add on products (Windows Media Player, the built-in DVD player on XP, the MP3 ripper on XP, all of which are inferior products to those sold by independent vendors, but because of their inclusion in the OS will likely cause consumers to put up with the limitations inherent to the included products rather than finding the superior replacements), default application preferences (Windows uses various methods to define what the default application will be for a given file extension, and it is often extremely difficult to change or remove the preference of using a Microsoft application over any alternate program, Programming API (Microsoft maintains closed Application Programming Interfaces for its products, but the greater problem is the frequency with which they are willing to change underlying code to leverage monopoly power, this was seen with Dr. DOS, with Internet Explorer, and frequently crops up as incompatibilities between OS versions, which force users to upgrade to keep their programs running), file formats (the proprietary and constantly changing file formats for Excel, Word, and Powerpoint, which frequently force upgrades to Microsoft Office since the newer versions are incompatible with earlier versions [note that this has been less true since Office 97]), and version upgrades (Windows 95, 98, 98SE, ME, NT, 2000, and XP. Most of these have simply been bug fixes of the previous versions, and in most cases it was impossible to obtain these bug fixes without upgrading to the newer version which typically introduced new features along with the bug fixes which would create further instability in the system. Additionally Microsoft has canceled service packs for systems in order to force upgrades. Service Pack 7 for NT was canceled, leaving many to apply hundreds of hot-fixes to achieve a secure/stable system).

Given the numerous and varied ways that Microsoft is using and perpetuating its monopoly a much stronger judgment should be created. I

see a whole host of options from not allowing Microsoft to further integrate other applications into their OS, and in fact forcing them to strip out many of their current add on products, open sourcing their APIs or forcing them to keep their APIs open to vendors who would like to create compatible products, forcing continued maintenance of OS releases, splitting the company to keep the integration for allowing Microsoft to be the single source for all computer programs, limiting their ability to lock out other vendors with OEM contracts.

Given Microsoft's proven guilt in this case and non-compliance with previous anti-trust violations I can only hope that this time a more serious punishment will be tendered. Microsoft should be allowed the freedom to innovate, but they should actually have to be innovative as opposed to simply leveraging out their competition.

-Blair Heiserman

Please do not publish my address.
55 Barrett Rd Apt 509
Berea, OH 44017